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August 2012

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Volume 20, Number 4

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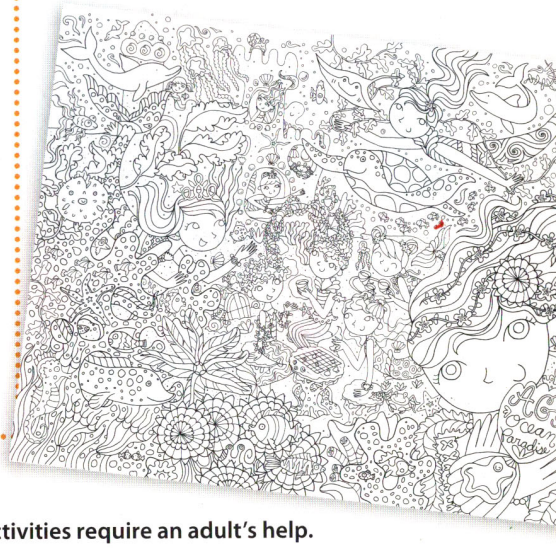


Cover photo: Steven Talley

Safety first!
Some of our projects and activities require an adult's help.
When you see this symbol, be sure to ask an adult to work with you.

Girls EXPRESS

Soda Pops

What's cooler on a hot day than a frozen float?

1. Pour about ½ cup **strawberry soda** into a **small pitcher,** and place it in the freezer for about 15 minutes.

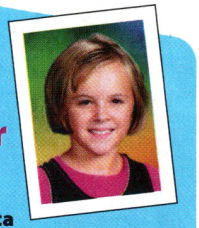
2. Scoop **vanilla ice cream** into a **3-ounce plastic cup,** filling the cup about ⅓ full. Press ice cream firmly into the bottom of the cup. Insert a **food-safe stick** into the ice cream.

3. When the soda is cold and the bubbles have mostly disappeared, slowly pour soda into the cup. Scoop off foam with a **spoon.** Fill carefully until the cup is almost full.

4. Cover the cup with **foil,** poking the end of the stick through the foil. Freeze overnight, and then remove the cup. Yum!

Make this treat with any soft drink—**orange, grape,** or even **root beer!**

Meet an AG Reader



Daria W.
Age 11, Minnesota

I live with... my mom, dad, and sister, as well as my hermit crab, Hermie, and my hamster, Hammie.

One thing most people would never guess about me: I've been to 23 states—by car!

A word my friends would use to describe me: talkative

A time I wanted to disappear: I was in a dance class that performed for high-schoolers. We were supposed to do a single turn and run across the stage. I forgot what to do, spun around three times, and then had to zoom over to the other side of the stage. Ugh.

A time I laughed my head off: My sister, Natalia, and I set up a little stand at the end of our driveway. It was a slow day, so my sister started yelling that we were having a sale. Everybody was staring at us!

In 20 years, I'll be performing with the New York City Ballet.

My favorite part of AG: I love the doll crafts.

Introduce Yourself!

To find out how to be a featured reader, go to americangirlmagazine.com/playmagazine

Photo: Mike Walker Illustrations: Tracey Wood

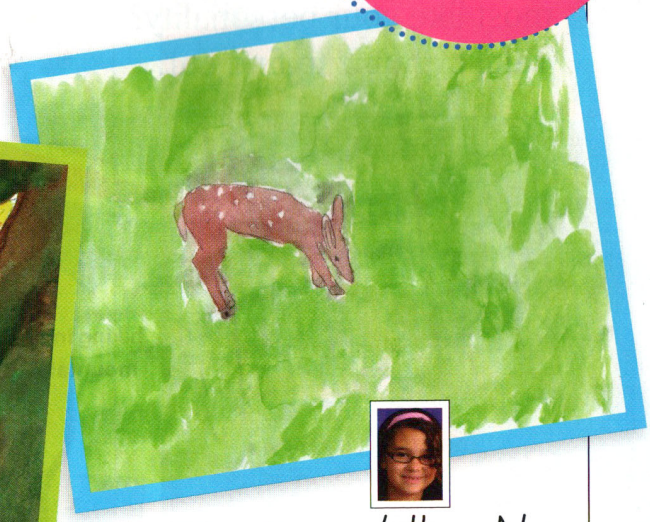
AG Art Gallery

Adorable animals from readers like you!

Help us fill our gallery! Send color copies of your **original artwork** or **photos** to the address on page 7. Sorry, we can't return entries.

Sarah G.
Age 12, Virginia

Claire G.
Age 11, New Jersey



Lillian N.
Age 11, Minnesota

Emily J.
Age 13, Michigan

Christina A.
Age 9, Virginia

Yuan L.
Age 13, California

Mini Quiz

Sandal Sense

Which summer shoes are most like your personality? Take our quiz to find out.

Start

On vacation, you'd want to be ...

- hitting the beach. → **The thing you miss most about school is...**
- hiking in the mountains. → **The thing you miss most about school is...**
- seeing friends. → **On a shelf in your room, you're most likely to display...**
- touring a big city. → **On a shelf in your room, you're most likely to display...**

The thing you miss most about school is...

- gym. → **Your favorite clothing item is...**
- recess. → **Your favorite clothing item is...**

On a shelf in your room, you're most likely to display...

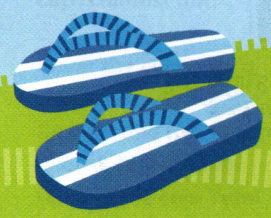
- sports trophies. → **Your favorite clothing item is...**
- shimmering snowglobes. → **The instrument you'd want to learn to play is...**
- seashells. → **The instrument you'd want to learn to play is...**

Your favorite clothing item is...

- a sporty sweatshirt. → **Surfer sandals**
- a vintage T-shirt. → **Free-spirited kicks**
- skinny jeans. → **The instrument you'd want to learn to play is...**

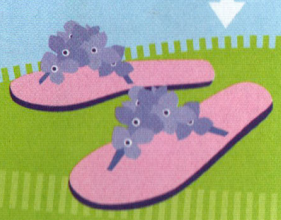
The instrument you'd want to learn to play is...

- the ukulele. → **Surfer sandals**
- the drums. → **Free-spirited kicks**
- the violin. → **Flowery flip-flops**



Surfer sandals

Free-spirited kicks



Flowery flip-flops

Snip! Snip! Magic!

Wow your friends with this funny stunt.

1. Hold up a plain sheet of computer paper in front of your audience. Ask if anyone thinks you can cut a hole in it that's big enough to walk through.

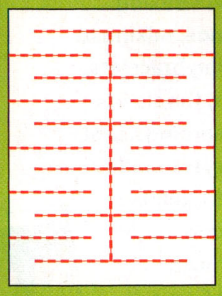
2. They'll say no. So you whip out some scissors and snip the paper using the pattern below. Do this as quickly as you can without messing up.

3. When your snips are made, carefully stretch the paper apart into a giant loop—don't rip it! Climb through the loop, smile big, and take a bow.

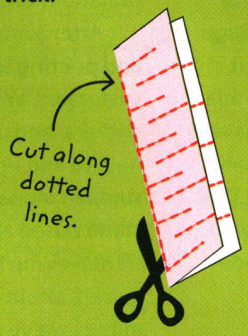
Try It First!

Before you go in front of an audience, practice this trick several times. Here is a pattern for the snips you'll need to make in order to do the trick.

Memorize the snips for a more amazing effect with your audience, but keep the pattern close by in case you need it.



1. Here's what the pattern looks like.



2. Fold paper in half, and cut a center line.

3. Make the other cuts as long as possible.

Creative Corner

Shade Sleeve

Cut out card. Flip over for directions.

AG Poll

Answer these questions, and then turn the page to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

Which item would you like to see in a vending machine?

* nail polish
* shoes
* MP3 player
* hair ties

Which would you do on vacation in Hawaii?

* go surfing
* go snorkeling
* go play on the beach
* go to a luau

Shade Sleeve

Protect your sunglasses with this simple case. Cut a piece of **fleece** 6½ inches by 7¼ inches. Fold the fleece in half lengthwise. Use **tacky glue** to close one short edge and one long edge, leaving one short edge open. Let dry. Decorate using **ribbon** and **appliqués.** Your new case will protect your shades while you're out and about.

AG Poll

What girls told us at americangirl.com:

In a vending machine, girls want to see...

53% MP3 player

20% nail polish

15% shoes

12% hair ties

In Hawaii, girls would...

33% go play on the beach

28% go snorkeling

26% go surfing

13% go to a luau

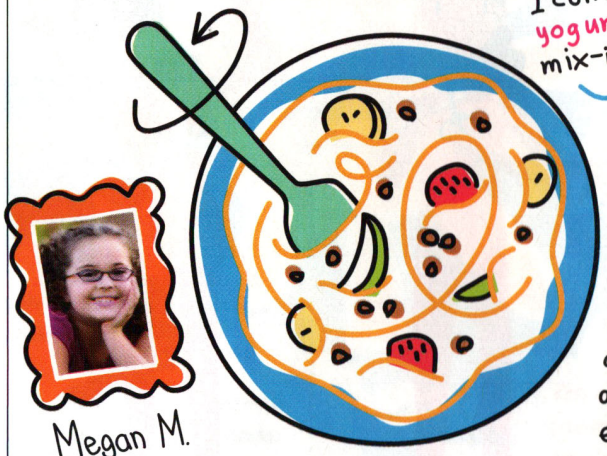
To answer our weekly poll question, go to americangirl.com/playmagazine

Reader Recipe

Morning Munchies

In a bowl, combine 1 container yogurt with mix-ins such as

* Cereal
* Sliced fruit
* A crumbled granola bar

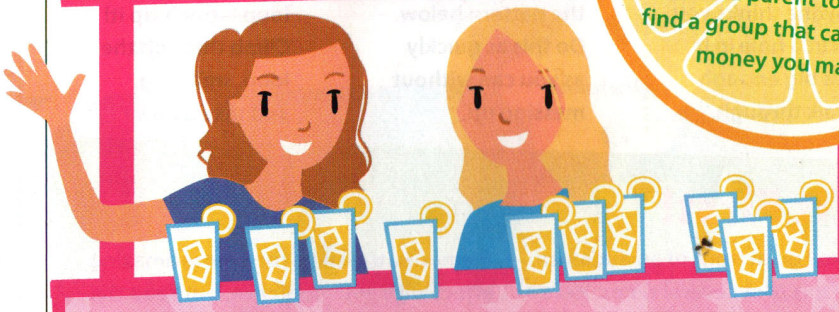


Megan M.
Age 10, Oregon

Grab a spoon, and dig in! You can have a different breakfast every day.

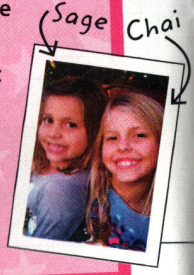
Shining Star

You can shine, too. Raising money for cancer research might help cure the disease one day. Plan your own fund-raiser (even a small one), and ask a parent to help you find a group that can use the money you make.



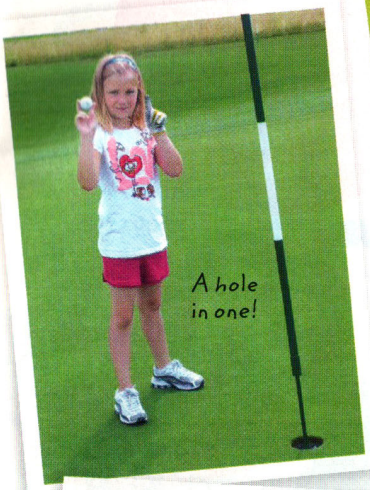
Can one cup of lemonade really make a difference for kids with cancer? Sage and Chai M. will tell you that it can. Each summer, the California sisters join forces with friends and family to open a huge lemonade stand in front of their house. The girls get support from a national group that organizes lemonade stands to raise money for childhood cancer research. "We tell people about sick kids," says Sage, age 7. "We say, 'Do you know that people are sick? You can help.' People give donations and get lemonade."

After a long day of mixing and pouring lemonade, talking to customers, and selling bracelets, stickers, and pencils, the sisters help to add up the earnings. Last summer alone, their lemonade stand raised about $11,000. "It makes me feel good about myself, about how much money we've raised," says Chai, age 9. "We get to send all that money to help kids who have cancer."

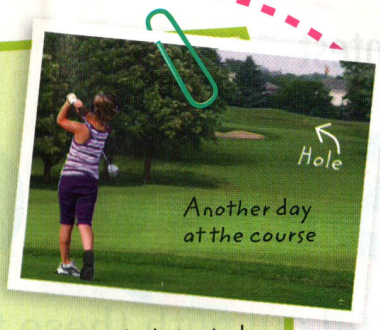


True Story

It's incredibly hard to hit a hole-in-one in golf, but Reagan did it!



A hole in one!



Hole

Another day at the course

I got a trophy for winning a competition.

Dear American Girl,

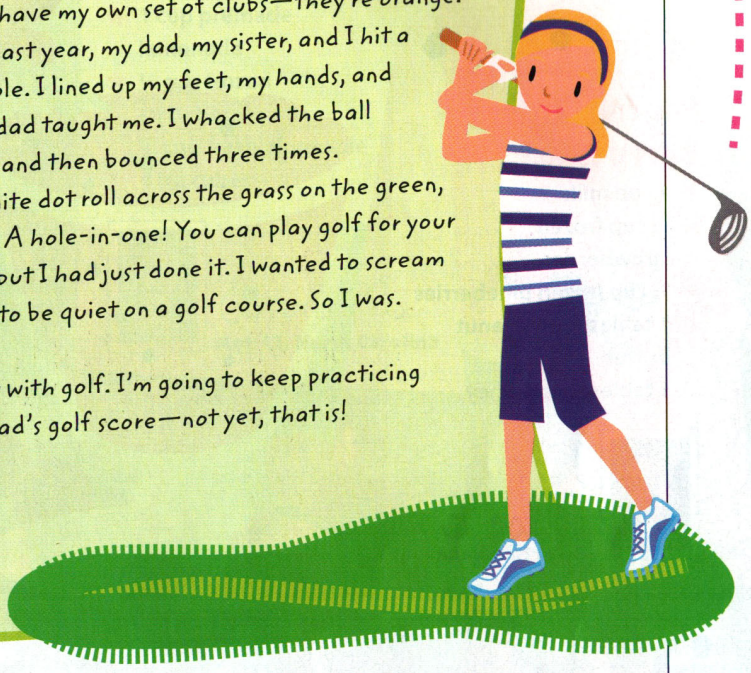
I love playing golf, especially when I hit the ball a long way. My dad started teaching me to play when I was three years old. I take lessons, and we play tournaments together. I even have my own set of clubs—they're orange.

Right after a tournament last year, my dad, my sister, and I hit a few extra balls on the third hole. I lined up my feet, my hands, and the ball to tee off, just as my dad taught me. I whacked the ball hard. It sailed about 85 yards and then bounced three times.

As I watched the little white dot roll across the grass on the green, it plunked right into the hole. A hole-in-one! You can play golf for your whole life and never hit one, but I had just done it. I wanted to scream and yell, but you're supposed to be quiet on a golf course. So I was. I was screaming inside.

I've got another goal now with golf. I'm going to keep practicing because I haven't beat my dad's golf score—not yet, that is!

Sincerely,
Reagan K.
Age 7, Illinois



Write to Us

Whenever you send us a letter, always include your

- **First and last name**
- **Address and phone number**
- **Birth date, including year**
- **School photo or other portrait**
- **Parent's signature**

Send us a cool envelope! Print our address neatly on the front and your return address on the back.

We can't print every letter, but we read everything you send to us. Hope to hear from you soon!

Envelope art by
Elena E.
Age 11, Virginia

Stay Cool!

Chill out with these frosty, fruity, and fun summer drinks.

All of these recipes need to be mixed up in a blender. Ask a parent to help you cut fruit pieces and blend each drink until smooth. Serving sizes are equal. Serve cold.

Peanut Butter Berry Blast

- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup frozen strawberries
- ½ cup frozen blueberries
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon honey

Chloe E.
Age 11, Indiana

Wowie Brownie Milk Shake

- ¾ cup milk
- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 1 plain brownie, cut into chunks
- Drizzle of chocolate syrup

Alana M.
Age 10, California

Sweet & Spicy Shake

- ⅓ cup milk
- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream
- ⅓ cup vanilla yogurt
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 banana
- Pinch of nutmeg

Michelle M.
Age 9, Massachusetts

Green Dream

- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup lime sherbet
- ⅓ cup whipped topping
- 1 cup frozen peaches
- Dollop of whipped topping to top drink

Lexi F.
Rachel T.
Ages 12 and 10, Illinois

Orange Cloud

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup orange-flavored yogurt
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 8 ice cubes

Danielle D.
Age 11, Connecticut

Pretty Pink Lemonade

- 1 cup premade lemonade
- ½ cup frozen strawberries
- ½ cup fresh pineapple
- 4 ice cubes

Anna R.
Age 12, North Carolina

Moo-velous Milk-Free Smoothie

- 1 cup vanilla soy milk
- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 banana

Jasmine R.
Age 11, Hawaii

New Contest: Birthday Cakes

In honor of *American Girl* magazine's 20th birthday, draw a dream birthday cake! To send your entry, go to page 7 and follow the instructions. Postmark deadline: August 10, 2012. Winners will appear in the January/February 2013 issue. Sorry—we can't return entries. ★

Illustrations: Lauren Scheuer

I was embarras

We were camping, and my brother scared me. **I screamed so loud** that a park ranger stopped to tell me to quiet down!

Analise S.
Age 13, California

I laughed really hard and **sprayed lemonade** all over my friends!

Alice R.
Age 13, New Mexico

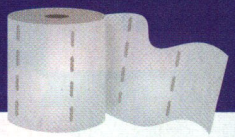
I was chewing a huge wad of gum and **lost it—in my hair!** Everyone was staring at me.

Shannon N.
Age 11, New York

More Cringe-Worthy Stories

I was walking a golden retriever for my summer job. As we passed a field where my friends were playing soccer, the dog ran after the ball. **She pulled so hard that I fell flat on my face in front of everyone!**

Sara H.
Age 13, Pennsylvania



I was at the beach and went to the bathroom—when I came out, **a long trail of toilet paper was coming out of my bathing suit!**

Carolyn N.
Age 9, Massachusetts

I was playing hide-and-seek and **decided to climb over a fence to hide. When I got to the top, my pants got stuck!** I screamed for help, and a friend ripped me (and my pants) from the fence. I had a huge hole in my pants. Everyone was laughing.

Kelly W.
Age 12, California

sed when...

I squirted a ketchup packet across a table and **onto a man I didn't know!**

Sarah D.
Age 9, Texas

I sang my solo during the wrong part of a huge dance number!

Sarah H.
Age 13, Ohio

This or That

Our mini quiz is based on readers' own embarrassing summer stories! So, would you rather...

forget your swimsuit for a vacation and have to swim in your clothes

OR

get splashed by a penguin at the zoo?

lose your fishing pole because a fish dragged it to the bottom of the lake

OR

do a belly flop in front of your swim team?

accidentally pick up a dead fish at the beach

OR

tip over in a chair and fall into a pool?

Illustrations: Paige Pooler

Say It!

American Girl magazine's 20th birthday is coming! Help us celebrate by sending your answers to one or more of these questions:

1. Where would you want to have a birthday party?
- **a.** At a water park
- **b.** At a giant mall
- **c.** At a bowling alley
- **d.** At a horse stable
- **e.** At a fancy hotel

2. Have you ever had a birthday slumber party?
- **Yes**
- **No**

3. Which birthday cake flavor would you choose?
- **a.** Vanilla
- **b.** Chocolate
- **c.** Lemon
- **d.** Red velvet
- **e.** Strawberry

4. Would you rather...
get 1,000 gifts **OR** *give* 1,000 gifts?

5. What would you want to find inside a party piñata?
- **a.** Gold coins
- **b.** MP3 players
- **c.** Jewelry

6. What is your best birthday story?

To answer, go to page 7 and follow the instructions. Postmark deadline: August 10, 2012. Some answers will appear in the January/February 2013 issue. ★

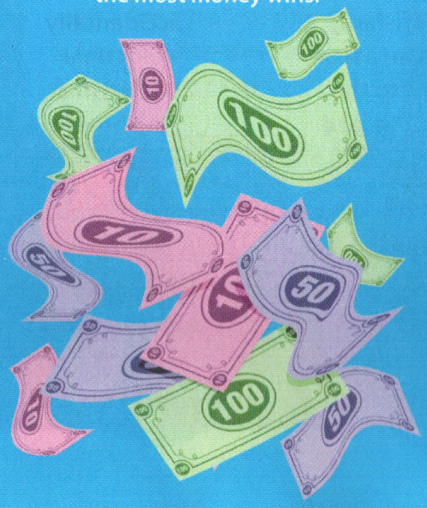
Chill Out

25 ways to stay cool

1. Spend an afternoon skating at an indoor ice rink.

2. Read a book that has a snowy setting.

3. Shuffle together a stack of pretend money from a board game. Set the stack on a table in front of a fan. Ask an adult to switch on the fan so you and your friends can be ready to snatch up the flying bills. Whoever collects the most money wins!



4. Slurp some fruit slush! Put ¼ cup water, 1 cup fresh strawberry slices, and 1 cup ice cubes in a blender. Ask an adult to blend well. Pour into a glass.

5. Play "cold potato" in a wading pool with a small block of ice.

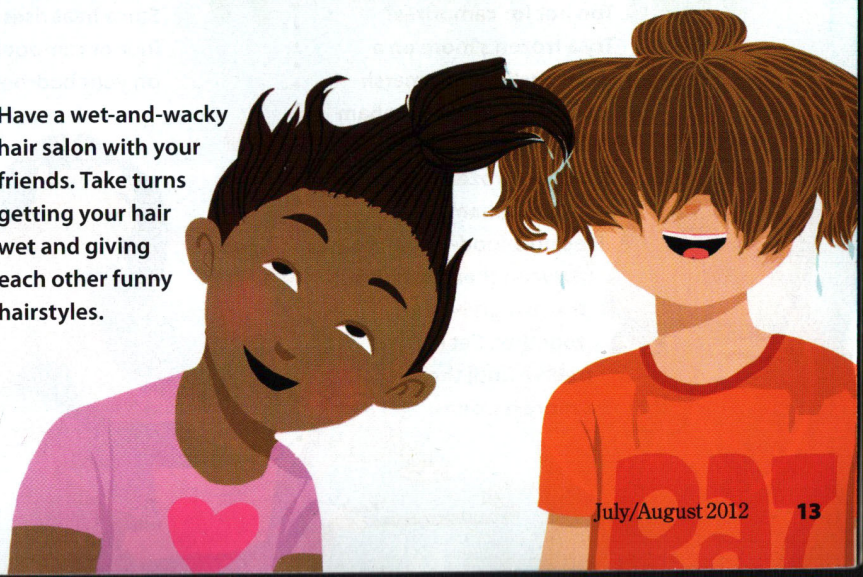
6. In this relay race, each person gets a flying disc and a water balloon. The goal is to carry the water balloon on the disc with one hand (like a server at a restaurant) from one end of the yard to the other. Whoever reaches the other side first wins.

7. Freeze grapes and berries. Pop a few into a drink. The fruits will keep it cool, and you can eat them, too.

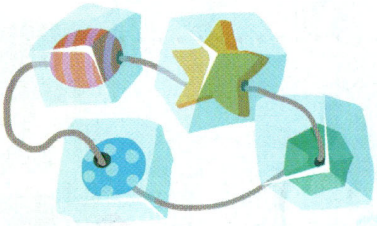
8. Have a hunt for glow-in-the-dark plastic stars in your backyard just after the sun sets.

9. Put a bowl of ice in front of a fan. Turn on the fan and sit in front of it. Instant air-conditioning!

10. Have a wet-and-wacky hair salon with your friends. Take turns getting your hair wet and giving each other funny hairstyles.



11. Make a cool bracelet! Start with a mini ice cube tray. Cut a piece of elastic cord that's a few inches longer than the tray. Lay the cord across the top of one of the tray's rows. String plastic beads on the cord so that there is one bead per compartment. Fill the tray with water. Place in the freezer until frozen. Gently pop the cubes out of the tray. Now you have a frozen bracelet to wear outside.



12. Have a relay race to see who can carry the most water balloons in her shirt from one bucket to another. You can take as many trips as you need. The team who has the most water balloons in its bucket when time's up wins!

Illustrations: Galia Bernstein

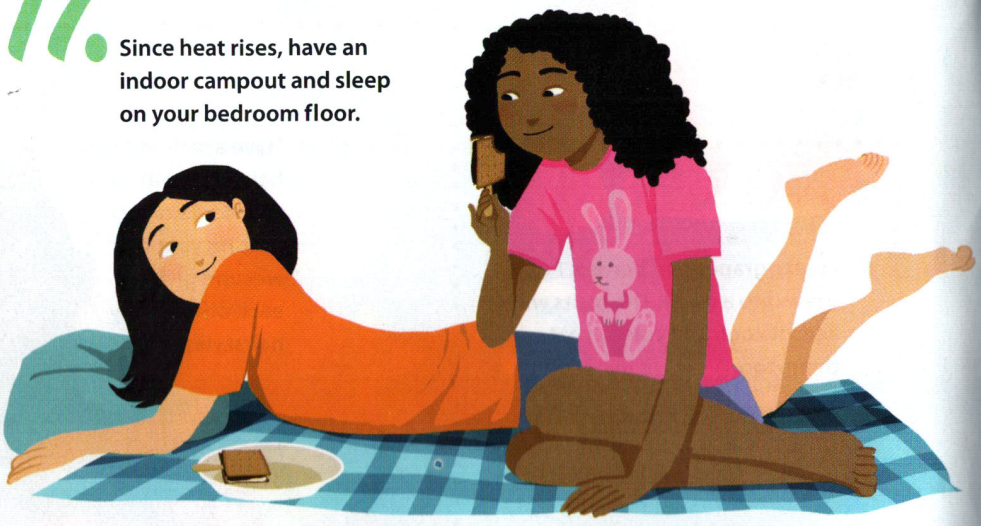
13. Balance as many wet sponges on your body as you can. Race a friend across the yard to see who can reach the other side with the most sponges. If you drop a sponge, you have to leave it and keep going.

14. Store lotion and lip balm in the fridge. They'll be extra refreshing when you use them!

15. Too hot for campfires? Try a frozen s'more on a stick! First, spread marshmallow creme on a graham cracker. Then, spread some chocolate frozen yogurt on another graham cracker. Placing a food-safe stick between them, sandwich the two grahams together. Set in the freezer until the s'more hardens.

16. Poke a small hole in a water balloon and pass it around a circle of people outside. Before a player can hand it off, she needs to say something she'd see at a beach. Whoever has the balloon when the water runs out has to sit down. Keep playing with new balloons until there is one player left.

17. Since heat rises, have an indoor campout and sleep on your bedroom floor.



18. Freeze plastic jewelry in a cup of water. (Have a cup for each girl.) Once frozen, peel off the paper cup. On "Go!" each girl has to melt the ice by rubbing it against her skin. Whoever reaches the "treasure" inside first wins!

19. In this game, players stand in a circle, an arm's length apart. Start passing water balloons quickly around the circle. (You may have to toss them.) If a balloon breaks, the last person who touched it has to sit down, and play continues over her head. The last person standing wins.

24. Make a mini umbrella to shade a sundae! Cut out a small circle of scrapbook paper. Punch a hole in the center of the circle. Then cut out a small wedge from the circle. Wrap around a drinking straw and tape the paper to hold in place.

20. Take turns pitching and hitting with your friends, but use water balloons and a plastic bat. See who can hit the most balloons.

21. Choose one type of item—umbrellas, sweatshirts, beach towels—and use only those items to make a shade fort.

22. Take a nighttime walk with your parents. Don't forget bug spray!

25. Make a cool pack. Pour ½ cup of corn syrup into a plastic freezer bag. Seal the bag, making sure that all the air is out of it. Wrap the seal with duct tape so it won't leak. Place it in the freezer for 5 hours. (The syrup will get cold but won't freeze solid.) When it's cold, wrap it in a bandanna or towel and use it to cool off. ★

23. Gather sponges and buckets, and ask an adult if you can have a bike wash.

What's Your Creativity Style?

by Aubre Andrus

Take this quiz, score yourself, and then read the tips to boost your creativity.

1. You and your mom are redoing your room. You can't wait to...

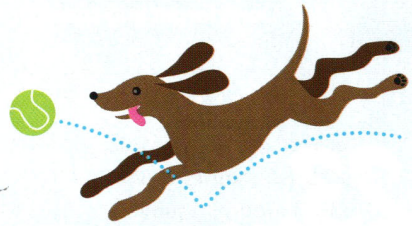
a. paint each wall a different color.
b. gather ideas from magazines.
c. add a few new accessories to just update the room.
d. re-create a room from your favorite TV show.

2. When it comes to gift giving, you...

a. think of a cool gift idea but decide to go with something safe.
b. give really thoughtful gifts that you spent a lot of time picking out.
c. give something handmade that can't be found at a store.
d. ask your friend what she'd like.

3. During practice for the camp play, you would NEVER...

a. stick to the script—you have to make this role your own!
b. keep quiet. You always have a few suggestions to contribute.
c. be the star—well, maybe in your dreams.
d. add your own lines—you'll perform the script exactly as it's written.



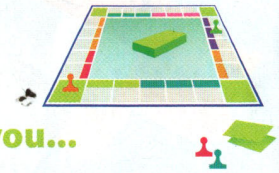
4. Your family is getting a new dog! You...

a. list great pet names from your favorite books.
b. blend your family's initials into one unique name.
c. share one special dog name that you've been saving forever.
d. suggest Curly because she has curly brown hair.

5. At a friend's sundae party, you...

a. make a classic sundae that could be on the cover of a magazine.
b. keep it simple but add a few interesting toppings on the side.
c. create a few funny combinations that your friends are eager to try.
d. make the wackiest combination of flavors and toppings possible.

6. When it comes to party games, you...



a. play the same games as last year because everyone liked them.
b. make up your own games that match the theme of the party.
c. plan at least 10 games to play so no one will get bored.
d. stick to the board games that you know your friends like.

SCORE

1. a-1, b-2, c-3, d-4
2. a-3, b-2, c-1, d-4
3. a-1, b-2, c-3, d-4
4. a-2, b-1, c-3, d-4
5. a-4, b-3, c-2, d-1
6. a-3, b-1, c-2, d-4

If you scored 6 to 10 points, you're a...

Mighty Maker

Not only is your brain always moving, but your hands are, too! You love to make outfits, recipes, or crafts.

CREATIVITY TIP: FOCUS
Finish one project before you start another. Don't lose your great ideas in a big mess!

If you scored 11 to 14 points, you're an...

Idea Machine

You love to brainstorm new ideas—you're a creative thinker whose well never runs dry. You'll try anything!

CREATIVITY TIP: WRITE
Don't lose your ideas—jot them down in a journal. Grab a friend and work down the list together.

If you scored 15 to 19 points, you're a...

Daydreamer

You dream big, but those ideas are kept locked in your head. You shine by putting a small spin on something safe.

CREATIVITY TIP: SHARE
Speak up when you have a good idea. Others want to hear what you have to say!

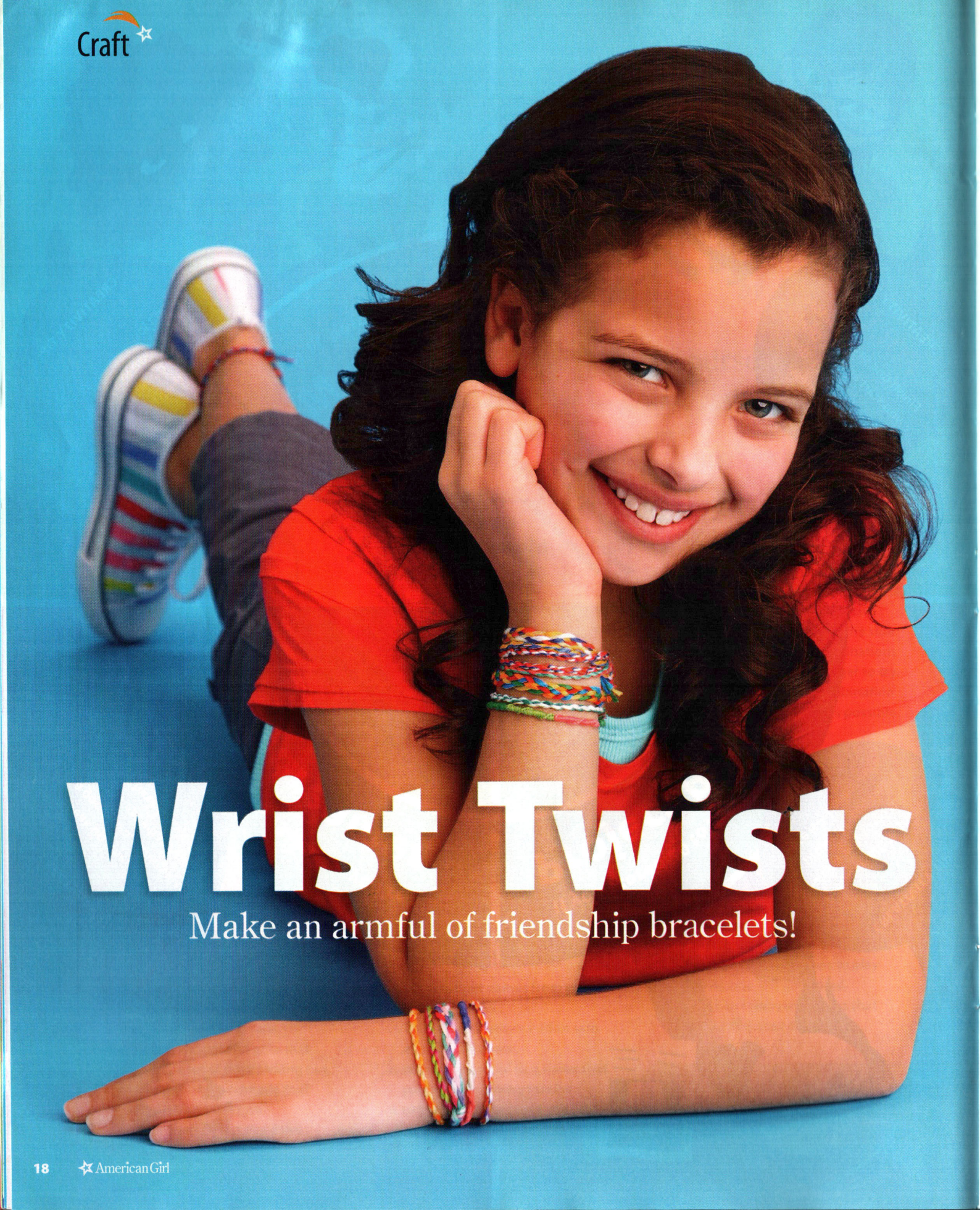
If you scored 20 to 24 points, you're a...

Project Planner

Some people prefer to stick to the rules—and that's OK! You find creativity in making the *perfect* project.

CREATIVITY TIP: DARE
Ask yourself, "Is there a new way to do this project?" You bet there is—brainstorm!

Illustrations: Stacy Peterson



Wrist Twists

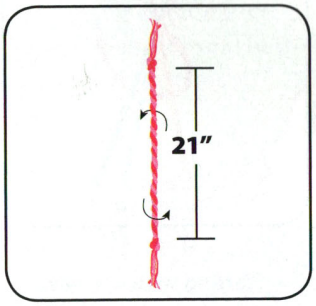
Make an armful of friendship bracelets!

Striped Spiral

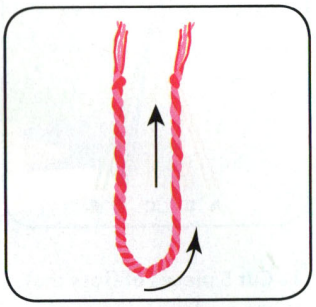
YOU WILL NEED

- embroidery floss
- ruler
- scissors
- clipboard

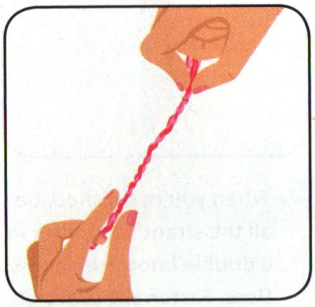
1. Cut 4 pieces of floss that are each 22 inches long. (Use two or more colors.) Gather the floss together and tie a knot at each end, leaving a ½-inch tail at the top and bottom. Secure one end to a clipboard to hold in place.



2. Pinch the bottom knot between your fingers and twist the floss. Continue twisting until the strands are tight. Keep holding the bottom knot while you move to step 3.



3. Place a finger from your other hand halfway up the twisted floss to mark the middle. Bring the bottom knot up to meet the top knot. Pull the tail out of the clipboard while pinching both knots together. Let go of the middle with your other hand so the floss twists on itself.



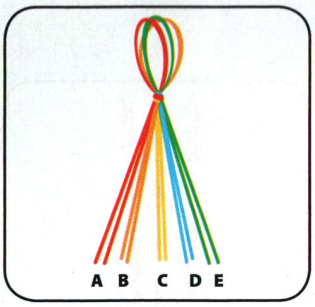
4. To smooth out kinks, gently pull on the bottom and smooth the floss with your fingers.

5. The top and bottom knot should now be side by side. Tie a third larger knot directly below them.

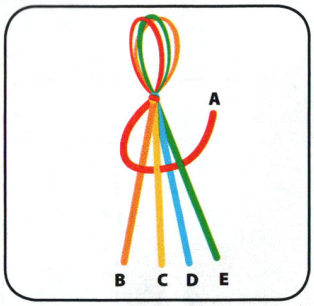
Tip: To wear, push a finger through the unknotted end to make a loop. Wrap the bracelet around a wrist and pull the knot through the loop. For a smaller bracelet, make a second knot.

Styling: Kristen Schroeder

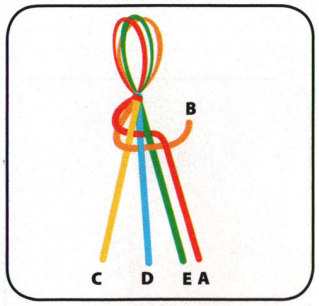
Rainbow Weaver



1. Cut 5 pieces of floss that are each 30 inches long. Fold the floss in half and tie a knot ½ inch from the folded end to form a loop. Then attach the loop to a clipboard. Group the floss by color to make 5 strands.



2. Starting with A, weave it through the other strands—over, under, over, under. Tightly pull A up and to the right while holding the other strands in place.

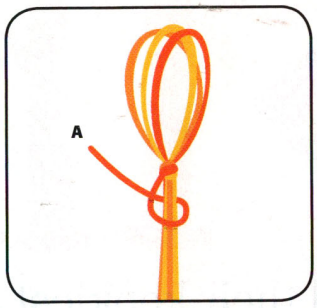


3. Repeat step 2 with B, weaving over, under, over, under. Tightly pull B up and to the right while holding the other strands in place.

4. Repeat step 2 with C, followed by D, and then E. Continue weaving until the bracelet is long enough to wrap around your wrist. (Remember to always weave with the strand that's farthest to the left.)

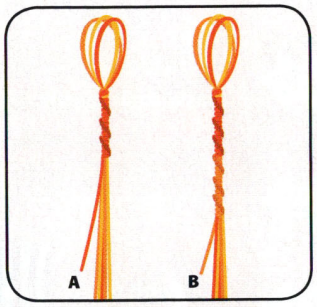
5. When you're finished, tie all the strands together in a double knot. Trim excess floss. Fasten the bracelet around your wrist by pulling the double knot through the loop.

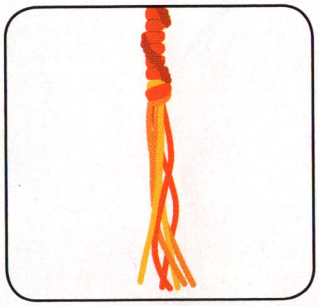
Color Twist



1. Cut 3 pieces of floss (each a different color) that are 36 inches long. Gather the pieces together and fold in half. Make a small loop by tying a knot about ½ inch from the folded end. Attach the loop to a clipboard. Arrange the floss as shown.

2. Starting with A, make one knot around B, C, D, E, and F. Using A, keep tying knots around the other strands until the band of color is about ½ inch long. Slide the knots together as you go.





3. After ½ inch, choose a strand in a different color. Repeat step 2 using the new color. Keep knotting, switching to a new color about every ½ inch.

4. When the bracelet is long enough to fit around your wrist, finish the bracelet by tying all the floss in a double knot. Trim excess. To wear, pull the double knot through the loop.

Bracelet Tips

* You'll need to attach your bracelet to a protected surface while you work. A clipboard works best—and it's portable!

* If you don't have a clipboard, you can attach the floss to a protected surface with masking tape.

* Make an extra-long bracelet and wrap it around your wrist a few times before attaching the ends. Or, make a long bracelet and wear it as an anklet instead.

Need bracelet-making help? Visit americangirl.com/playmagazine for a how-to video!

This OR That

We asked readers to send their kookiest questions. Here are 40 of your best ones.

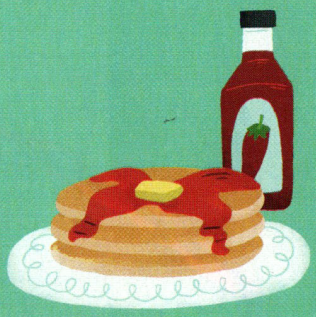
Ewww!

Would you rather...

have a pet worm OR a pet ant?

eat a fish-flavored cupcake OR turkey-flavored chips?

have 20 hamburgers in three minutes OR 30 hot dogs in two minutes?



put ketchup on cupcakes OR hot sauce on pancakes?

eat hot salad OR cold soup?

Hmmm...

Would you rather...

be a famous artist OR a famous basketball coach?

host a news show OR a game show?

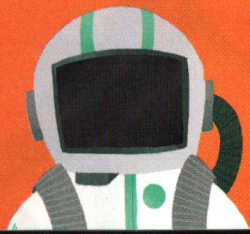
be friends with a movie star OR with the president?

be the funniest person on TV OR the friendliest?

break a world record OR be in a movie?

meet your favorite fictional character OR a real person you admire?

discover a new flower OR be an astronaut?



Ha-ha!

Would you rather...

have a barking cat OR a meowing dog?

teach a polar bear to dance OR a lemur to sing?

play soccer in high heels OR baseball in roller skates?

have breakfast with a bear OR dinner with a dolphin?

live in a tea kettle OR underneath a mushroom?

have your hair cut by a gorilla OR a circus clown?

fill balloons with cheese OR with whipped cream?

sing bad songs and get paid in stuffed animals OR sing good songs but get paid in spiders?

skydive into pudding OR swim in grape juice?

throw a pie at a fish OR have a fish throw one at you?

be a human glue stick OR a human dictionary?

Random!

Would you rather...

wear a crown OR a baseball cap?

have a water slide in your backyard OR a carousel?

be a firefly OR a butterfly?

live in a house that has trampolines instead of floors OR in a tree house with an elevator?

have your hair grow an inch every day OR an inch every five years?

wear a swimsuit everywhere OR a coat?

have rainbow colors in your hair OR zebra stripes?

play on moving monkey bars OR swings that swing themselves?

go to a restaurant with a great view but bad food OR one with a bad view but great food?

Yikes!

Would you rather...

live with Bigfoot for a month OR ride the Loch Ness Monster?

sing a song and fall off the stage OR mess up the lyrics?

ride on a wild hippopotamus OR get shot out of a whale's spout?

hug a porcupine OR kiss a lizard?

ride in the world's fastest car OR on the world's slowest roller coaster?

go to a dance with a shark OR with an electric eel?

jump in an outdoor pool during winter OR in a super-hot lake during summer?

have a sleepover with a ghost OR with a werewolf? ★

Illustrations: Alyssa Nassner

Make a **SPLASH** with an ocean-themed party!

SEA SPREE

Photos: Steven Talley Styling: Tricia Doherty, Stephanie Gabrys, Janie Goldstein, Cindy Stutzel

Fish, Fish, Shark!

Use a sponge to play a wet version of "Duck, Duck, Goose." Drip on the "fish" and drench the "shark"!

Dolphin Challenge

In this game, each guest takes a turn being the "dolphin." Start by having someone throw a balloon in the air. Then the dolphin tucks in her arms and must keep the balloon from touching the ground. She can hit the balloon with her head or her "flippers" (elbows). Each time she hits it with her head, she gets 2 points. Each time she hits it with a flipper, she gets 1 point. Once the balloon touches the ground, the player's turn is over and it's the next player's turn. Whoever gets the most points wins.

Sea Urchin Tag

Make a splashy sea urchin. Cut 3 clean sponges (4¾-by-3-inch size) into ½-inch-wide strips. Stack the cut sponges on top of one another. Tie a piece of string around the middle of the sponges and tie tightly. Fan out the strips so the sponge looks like a sea urchin. Then play tag! Get the "sea urchin" wet and use it to tag other players.

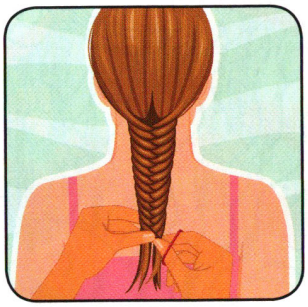
Fancy Fishtails

For seaworthy style, take turns giving each other fishtail braids. Here's how:

1. Divide hair into two sections. The left section should be in your left hand and the right section in your right hand.

2. With your left hand, pick up a small piece of hair from the outside of the left section and cross it over to the inside of the right section.

3. Now, pick up a small piece of hair from the outside of the right section and cross it over to the inside of the left section.



4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you reach the end of the braid. Secure with an elastic band.

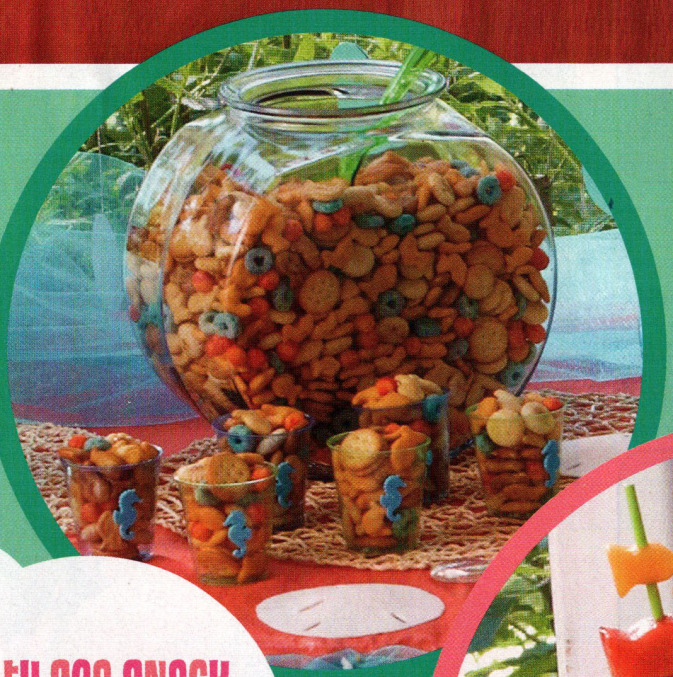
Seafood Spread

Cover your food table with a pink tablecloth and drape blue tulle fabric or crepe paper around it for "waves." Then add colorful stones, sand dollars, and starfish (available at craft stores). Hang sand dollars from ribbon hangers along the edge of the table.

Bubble Banners

Create an underwater world with a background of bubbles!

1. Cut a 5-foot-long piece of string. Lay the string flat on a covered work surface.
2. Use circle-shaped paper punches (2 inches wide or larger) to cut out "bubbles" from shimmery card stock.
3. Place one card-stock circle underneath the string, shimmer-side down.
4. Attach a piece of double-stick tape to a second card-stock circle. Place the second circle on top of the first, sandwiching the string between them.
5. Repeat steps 2–4 until there are circles all along the string. Make as many bubble banners as you'd like. Ask an adult to help you hang them vertically in a doorway or in front of a window.



Fish Sticks

These sweet snacks only look like fish. Use cookie cutters to create fish and starfish shapes from melon slices. Slide shapes onto plastic skewers and place in the freezer for 1 hour. At the party, arrange the skewers in a Styrofoam block. Cover the block with a layer of crushed graham crackers.

Salty Sea Snack

Make a fun fishy mix by tossing together fish-shaped crackers, cheese sandwich crackers, oyster crackers, and colorful cereal.

Sea Foam Floats

Break up 2 lime ice pops and remove the sticks. Place ice pop pieces and 4 cups blue juice drink in a pitcher. Stir the juice until the ice pop pieces dissolve. Then add ¼ cup vanilla ice cream and stir. Fill glasses halfway with blue-green juice. Add a scoop of vanilla ice cream to each glass. Pour lemon-lime soda over the ice cream until it foams to the top of the glass. Surf's up!

Coral Clusters

Create mini coral reefs! Ask an adult to melt 1 package (14 oz.) of pink or red candy melts in the microwave. Mix in 5 cups chow mein noodles until the noodles are coated. Drop by teaspoonfuls into mini muffin liners. Finish with star- and fish-shaped candy sprinkles. Let candy harden before eating.

Tide Pool Treasures

Dig for buried treasure at home! Set up this game outdoors before the party begins. Put a layer of sand and seashells in the bottom of a large plastic tub. Mix pearl beads, blue and green beads, and plastic charms in the sand. Ask an adult to help you fill the container with water. To play, each guest takes a turn using an aquarium net to scoop treasures from the sand. When a guest has scooped 20 items, it's the next guest's turn. After everyone takes a turn, dry off your discoveries.

Now, you and your friends can make jewelry using your treasures! Place hair clips, elastic cord, headbands, and craft glue on a covered table. Then try these ideas:

Headband: Use craft glue to attach beads to a headband. Let dry.

Charm bracelet: String beads on a piece of elastic cord. Add an ocean charm or two. Tie the ends of the cord together in a double knot.

Beach Comber

Before your guests arrive, fill small jars (cleaned and dried) halfway with sand. Place a small object in each one such as a seashell, toy animal, etc. Finish filling the jars with sand and tightly screw on the lids. When it's time to play, give each guest a piece of paper, a pencil, and a jar. Ask an adult to be the timer. On "Go!" each guest has 20 seconds to figure out what's inside her jar and write her answer on the paper. When time's up, everyone passes her jar to the left and the timer is reset. The game continues until everyone has had a chance to guess each jar's contents. At the end, whoever has the most correct answers wins!

Hair clip:
Use craft glue to attach beads to the end of a hair clip. Let dry.

Favors

Give "dive bags" to your guests to take home their ocean treasures. Ask an adult to help you cut colorful netting (available at fabric stores) into 1-by-1-foot squares. Place party favors in the center—swim goggles, a sparkly seashell, a small bottle of bubbles, etc. Then gather the corners together and tie a piece of colorful cord around the netting.

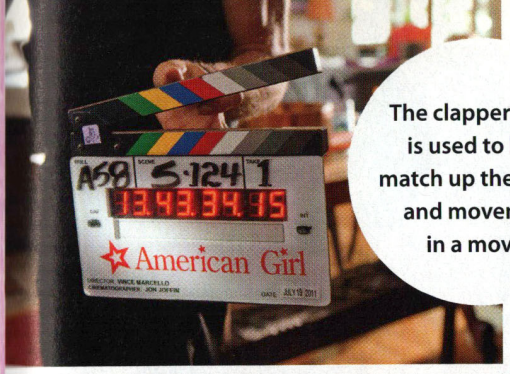
In the movie, a real gymnast does McKenna's gymnastics. I don't do the flips, but I still stick the landings! I'm doing one here for the camera.

Secret

Behind the scenes of a brand-new movie from American Girl

When Jade Pettyjohn learned about an audition for an American Girl movie, she was confused. "I thought it would be all the dolls together in a movie!" she remembers, laughing. She soon learned that she was trying out to play McKenna Brooks, American Girl's Girl of the Year and the subject of a new movie out this month.

Jade, age 11, got the part. But the thing is, McKenna is a gymnast. "I had never done gymnastics before!" says Jade, an actress and dancer. "All I could do was a cartwheel." She arrived on set two weeks before filming to learn poses, stretches, and moves to help her look like the serious gymnast she would be playing.

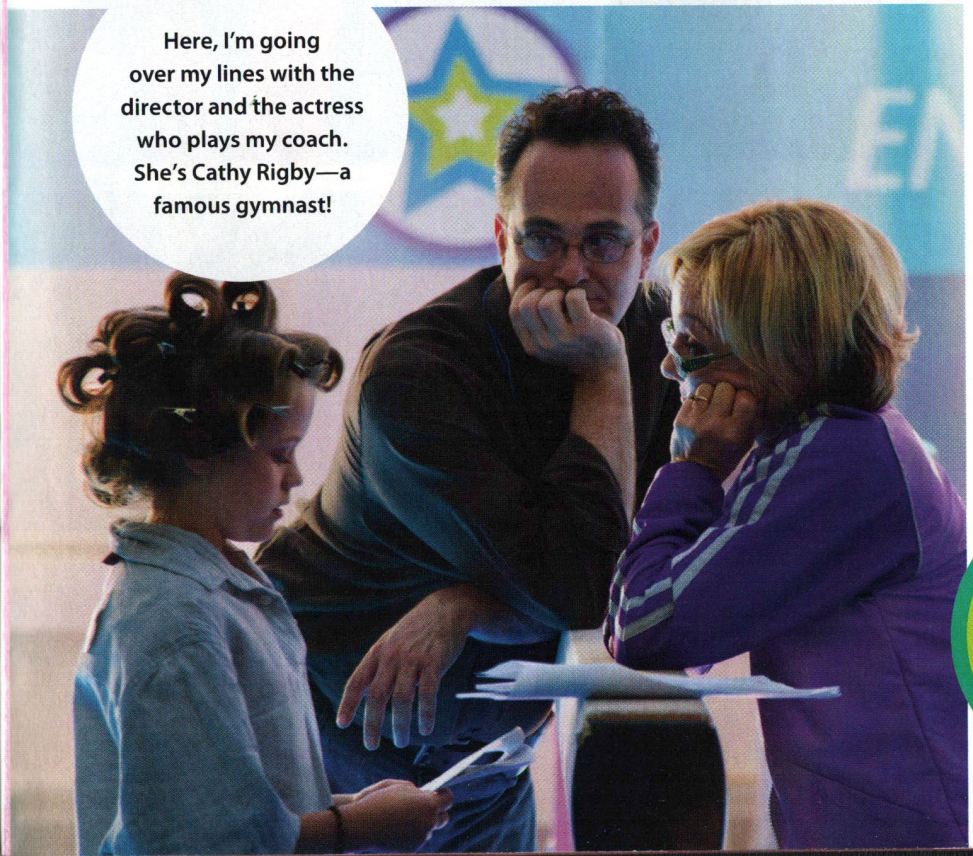


The clapperboard is used to help match up the sound and movement in a movie.

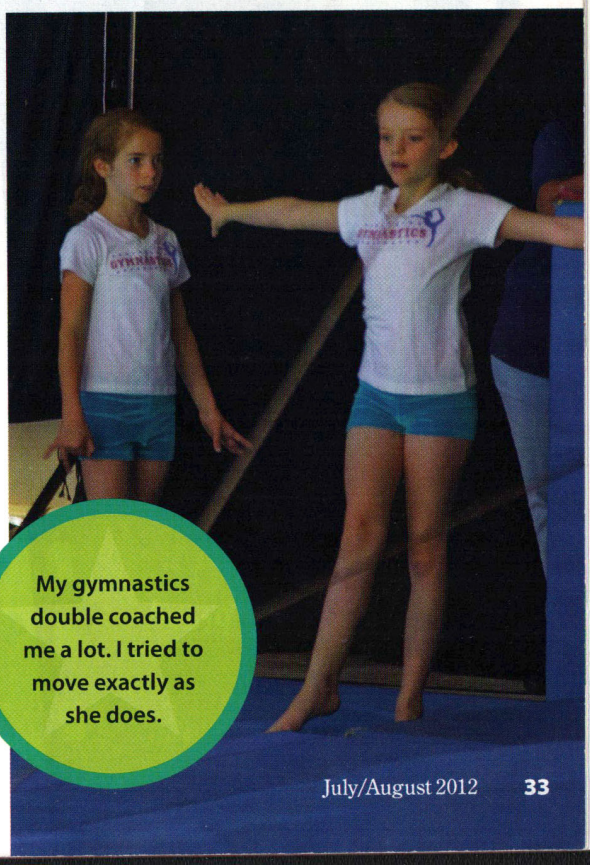
Meet my movie mom and dad! I have awesome parents at home—and on set, too.

Here I am with Kally and Ysa, who play McKenna's friends and teammates in the movie.

s from the Set

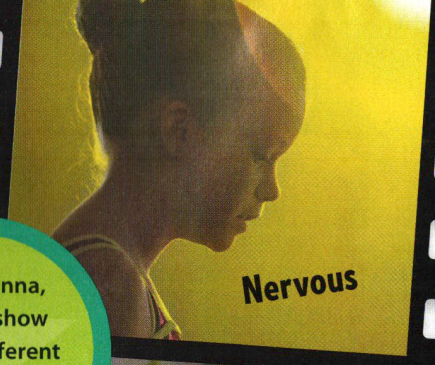


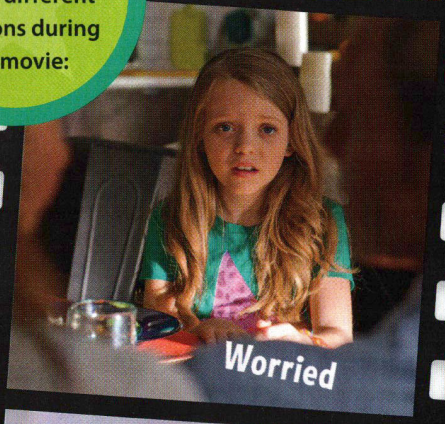
Here, I'm going over my lines with the director and the actress who plays my coach. She's Cathy Rigby—a famous gymnast!

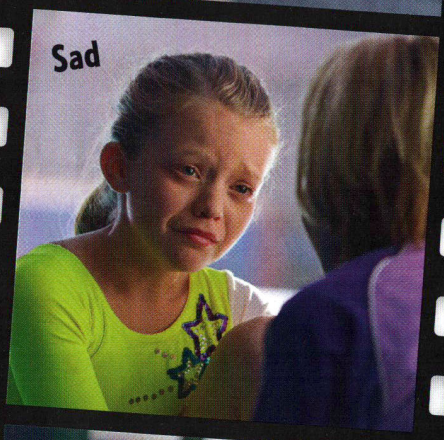


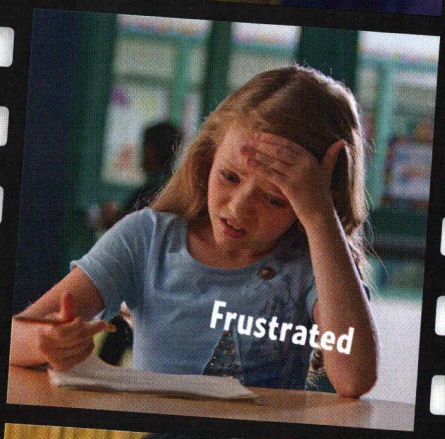
My gymnastics double coached me a lot. I tried to move exactly as she does.

As McKenna, I had to show lots of different emotions during the movie:

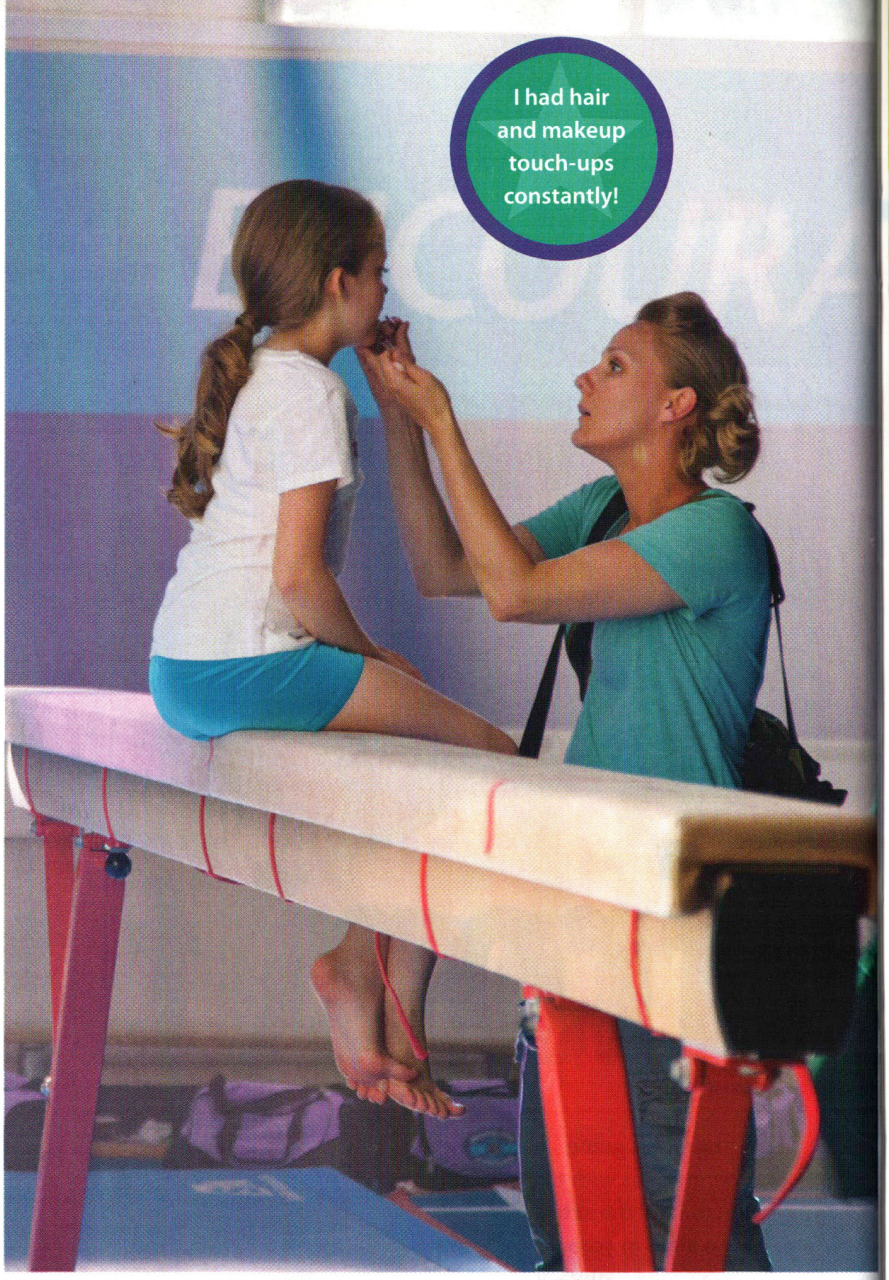

Nervous

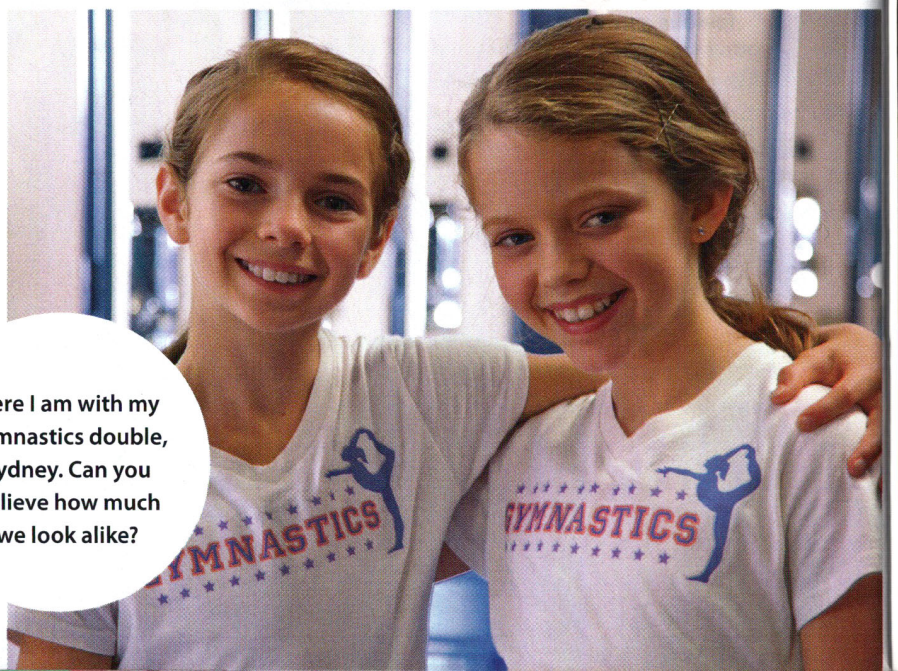

Worried


Sad

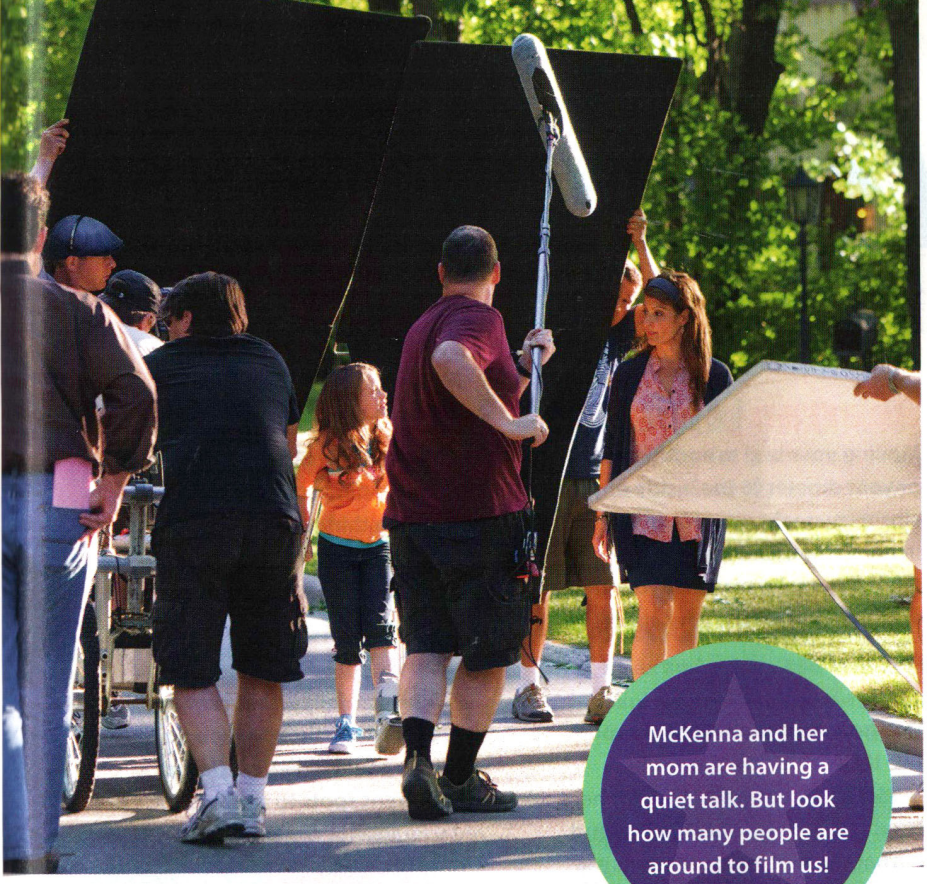

Frustrated

Proud


I had hair and makeup touch-ups constantly!



Here I am with my gymnastics double, Sydney. Can you believe how much we look alike?



McKenna and her mom are having a quiet talk. But look how many people are around to film us!

This is Kerris. She plays an amazing girl who is McKenna's reading tutor.

My mom and I put tape on the floor of our condo so that I could practice beam work at night without a beam!

The crew widened the balance beam on set to make it easier for me to stand on.

Photos: Allen Fraser; Jeff Rockwell

Here's the movie's story: McKenna is a fourth-grader from Seattle who loves gymnastics. Before fourth grade, she was a solid student, but now she's started having trouble with her reading. McKenna has to look inside herself to find the strength to overcome her school challenges and to come back from a gymnastics injury that threatens her dreams of competing.

"I think McKenna and I are a lot alike," Jade says. "We're both determined in what we do." McKenna isn't perfect, though, and that's something Jade likes about her. "I like how she handles things. I don't care that she makes some mistakes. You learn from mistakes," Jade says. "If everything were completely perfect, it wouldn't be real. It wouldn't make a good movie." ★

McKenna Shoots for the Stars airs July 14 at 8:00 P.M. Eastern/7:00 P.M. Central on NBC.

Redo Your Room

These easy ideas really pay off!

1. Reduce

The number-one thing you can do to make your room look better is reduce the clutter. Saying good-bye to your extra stuff will make your room feel bigger and help it to stay cleaner.

Ready? Go!

Go through your room—shelves, closet, drawers, everywhere—and check out your stuff. Ask yourself these questions:

* Do I still like this?
* Do I ever use this?
* Does this fit?
* Is this really me?

When your answer is "no," set the item aside for donation or trash.

Note: Make sure to show a parent everything you're getting rid of.

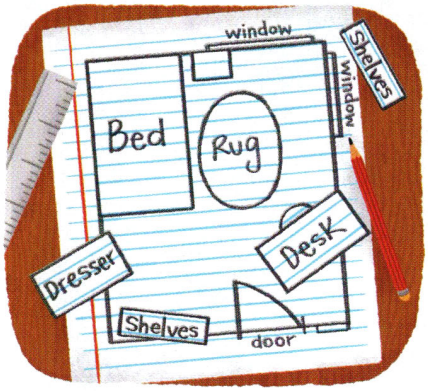
2. Rearrange

Moving your bed to another wall or your dresser to the inside of your closet can make your room feel instantly new. Before you move anything, make sure that your new arrangement will fit your space.

Ready? Go!

Design a scale model of your room like this:

* Measure your walls. (Ask for help with this if you need it.) Pretend that the feet measurements are inches, and cut out a rectangle of paper to represent your room. So, if your bedroom is 12 feet by 10½ feet, your paper would measure 12 inches by 10½ inches.
* Mark the paper with measured spots for door, closet, and windows. Note air vents, too.
* Measure all of your furniture, and make measured paper rectangles for each piece.
* Move the pieces around your paper room to see which arrangement you like. When you know what will work, ask for help moving your actual furniture.



3. Reorganize

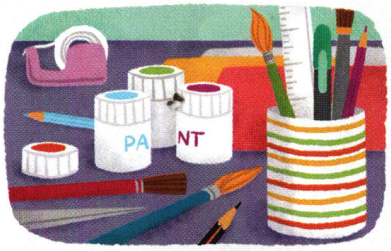
Your room probably is a mess at this point, so it's time to start putting things away. Now that you've de-cluttered, you can store stuff that's left in different ways.

Ready? Go!

Think carefully about how you use your room. What can you do to make your life easier? Design different spots to do just that:

* Read a lot on your bed?

* Make big colored posters when you're bored?



* Always have to search for your things when you're running out the door?

for Free

4. Rethink

Look around your new space. What's missing? Is there anything around the house that you could use to refresh your room?

Ready? Go!

With a parent's permission, check out the areas of the house where unused stuff is stored. Fire up your creativity to find new uses for old items.

Old kitchen crock = New sock bin
Old side table = New mini bookcase for reading spot
Old coat rack = New necklace hanger

5. Reveal

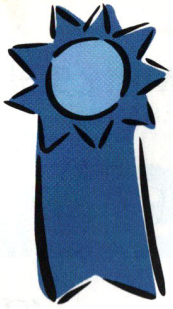
It'll feel great to show off your new space to your family and friends—especially when you tell them that you did it for free!

Ready? Go!

Relax and enjoy. (And keep that mini room model somewhere safe for the next time you need to redo your room!) ★

How Do I ...?
What do you want to learn how to do? Tell us by writing to the address on page 7.

Illustrations: Julia Berescartu



Contest Winners

Last November, we invited you to write your own original fiction stories. From the more than 1,000 entries, we picked these two winners!

Oh, Sister!

by Rachel C.

Tara thinks her little sister is a big pain. Will she survive a vacation with Tammy the troublemaker?

My Fourth of July vacation began with a scream.

"Tara!"

I jumped, my eyelids snapping open. I realized that my four-year-old sister, Tammy, was staring down at me. I struggled to push her off me as she bounced on my legs, her eyes lit up. "Fireworks!" she squealed over and over, and then she ran out of my room.

We were going to fly to Utah to visit my grandma for the Fourth of July. After I brushed my teeth, I double-checked everything I had packed—shorts, sunblock, sunglasses—*oh wait!* I said to myself. *I almost forgot my art supplies.* As I packed my colored pencils and sketchbook, Mom called me and said, "Out the door in 15 minutes, Tara!"

The next thing I knew, I had been crammed onto a plane and was watching my sister throwing crackers into the air and singing at the top of her lungs. Other passengers stared at her in annoyance. I slumped in my seat, my face feeling hot as I sensed the frustration of the people sitting next to us. Mom smiled and said, "She's just excited to see the fireworks," to the flight attendants who had politely asked Mom to quiet her daughter.

It was as if Tammy never did anything wrong. If Tammy threw a fit, Mom would say she was trying to get her point across. When Tammy broke a plate, Dad said she was just "helping" me empty the dishwasher. When Tammy scribbled all over the wall, instead of scolding her, my parents chuckled and said, "She's turning into an artist just like you, Tara."

Every year, I draw Grandma a picture for her birthday. I sighed as I contemplated what picture I should draw this time. As I looked out the window, I saw mountains below us. I got to work sketching a mountain range and pine trees, just like the beautiful scenery of Utah.

The pilot's voice came over the speakers. "Please fasten your seatbelts, folks. We're about to land."

When we walked off the plane, Tammy skipped around gleefully, yelling, "Fireworks! Fireworks!" *At least someone's happy,* I thought. As we scanned the crowd of people waiting for passengers, I was relieved to see the smiling face of my grandma. We raced over to her.

"Gramma! Gramma!" Tammy bounced up and down like a pogo stick. "Fireworks! Fireworks!"

"Hi, sweetheart." Grandma got down on one knee to hug Tammy and then swung her in the air. Tammy squealed with laughter.

Then Grandma hugged me. "It's so good to see you, Tara. I'm glad you're here to celebrate the Fourth of July with me."

Tammy ran around in circles making airplane sounds while Dad, Mom, Grandma, and I loaded the luggage into the car.

"How was the flight?" Grandma asked.

I rolled my eyes. "The flight was horrible.

Tammy was really loud."

Grandma chuckled. "Yes, she does have quite a personality."

I found myself smiling, focusing on Grandma's kind voice instead of Tammy's shrieks in the background. I thought, *Maybe this trip won't be so bad after all.*

I dropped my suitcase when I heard what Mom had said. "You've got to be joking!" I exclaimed.

Mom shook her head. "No, I'm sorry, Tara. You're going to have to share this room with Tammy. Aunt Kate is coming, and she's going to stay in the extra room. And Dad and I will be in the one down the hall—"

I didn't even hear the rest of what Mom was saying. My mind was racing as Tammy's shrieks sounded in my ears. "Yay! I get to share a room with Tara! I get to share a room with—"

Illustrations: Susan Reagan

How could this be happening? I thought. *I'll never get any sleep.*

"Are you OK, Tara?" I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up to see Grandma smiling sympathetically at me.

I forced a smile. "Yes, I'm fine." I didn't want to disappoint her. "I think I'll unpack."

Mom nodded. "OK. By the way, we're going to Happy World tomorrow morning."

I gasped. "But what about Shining Star Park? I love going there!"

"I know, honey," Mom replied. "But Tammy wouldn't be able to go on many rides. We decided to go to Happy World this year so that we can stay together as a family."

I stared down at my suitcase, anger simmering inside me. *All Happy World has are baby rides. Why does Tammy always get her way?*

I wanted to be alone, so I went outside with my sketchbook and sat under a tree. Looking at the scenery, I felt inspired to work on Grandma's drawing. Before I knew it, Mom was calling me inside for dinner. As I admired the shading on the mountains and the swirls of the sunset, I smiled to myself and thought, *This is the best picture I have ever made.*

After six hours of Happy World, I was exhausted—six hours of listening to Tammy scream with delight while she rode the carousel again and again and again.

Later, I decided to put the final touches on my picture for Grandma. *Everything will be fine,* I thought as I climbed the stairs. Everything about this trip had gone wrong so far, but tonight would make up for it. I would watch fireworks and eat hot dogs and...

I walked into the room, and my heart stopped. Tammy was lying on the bed, scribbling on a piece of paper. *Oh, no. Please, no!*

When Tammy saw me frozen in the doorway, she jumped from the bed. She ran over to me and grinned. "I drew you a picture," she sang.

"Out!" I screamed, and she gasped and scurried out of the room. I ran over to the bed. I picked up the paper, and it was just as I'd feared. My drawing had black scribbles all over it.

Mom appeared in the doorway with Tammy by her side. Tammy was sniffling, tears rolling down her chubby cheeks. Mom's gaze shifted to my picture, which I held with shaking hands.

"Everyone thinks she's so adorable. You and Dad never think she does anything wrong."

A shadow crossed her face. She gently nudged Tammy out of the room. She shut the door and sat down next to me. "Tara," she whispered, "I'm so sorry. I know you worked hard on that."

It felt as if a dam inside of me broke. "Everyone thinks she's so adorable," I said. "You and Dad never think she does anything wrong. But look at this!"

Mom said, "Tammy is challenging sometimes. But you yelling at her doesn't solve anything."

I sighed and glared at my mom. She smiled sadly. "I know you're mad. I'll explain to Tammy why. What happens next is up to you."

Darkness fell quickly. Mom laid out some blankets in the yard for us to sit on to watch the fireworks. Tammy was strangely quiet, sitting on the grass and staring up at the night sky.

I mustered up the courage to walk over to Grandma.

"Hi, Tara!" Grandma looked up at me, her eyes sparkling. I handed her the picture I had drawn, the one that Tammy had ruined.

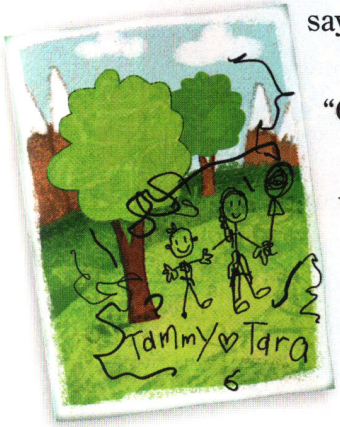
I said, "This was going to be for you, but Tammy scribbled all over it."

Grandma took it into her hands and said, "Oh, Tara, I love it!"

I looked down at her, confused. "Huh?"

She smiled at me. "Do you know why I love it so much? This picture represents the bond you and Tammy share. If you look closely at the picture..." She held up the paper for me to see. I had been so upset that I hadn't even stopped to look at the damage. But looking at the scribbles, I made out, "Tammy ♥ Tara." There was a faint doodle of two stick-figure girls smiling and holding hands.

A lump started to form in my throat. I had been so angry about the scribbles that I hadn't seen the words Tammy had written.



"Grandma—" I started to say, but she stopped me.

"No, Tara," she whispered. "Go make up with Tammy."

I nodded. The first firework burst in the dark sky. Tammy smiled and clapped her hands together, just once. I sat down on the blanket next to her. When she saw me, she slowly scooted closer to me.

"I'm sorry, Tara," Tammy said. "I wanted to draw like you."

I hugged her. "It's OK. I love you, too." I had been so worried about not having the perfect Fourth of July vacation that I forgot about what mattered most. ★

Meet the Author

Rachel, age 14, lives in Arizona.

Rachel C.

I based the character of Tammy on my four-year-old sister, Courtney. One time, I left my math homework on a table and Courtney scribbled all over it with colored pencils. Luckily, my teacher just laughed about it!

The Show Must Go On

by Loyalty T.

Ellie has never directed a play. What makes her think she can save the summer show?

Mr. Jacobs sighed and turned to the fidgeting campers.

"Role assignments for the play *America the Beautiful* are posted outside Juniper Lodge. Have a nice lunch."

"Bye, Mr. Jacobs!" I called hurriedly before running to Juniper Lodge. By the time I got there, Holly and Jasmine were already waiting for me.

"Well?" I asked hopefully.

"Holly refused to let me look before you got here," Jasmine said in a fake grouchy voice.

"That's right," Holly said. "Come on, Ellie! Did you get in?"

I scanned the crumpled paper.

Miss Tweet—Director

Ellie Rossmoor—Assistant Director

"Yeah," I said a little sadly. Really, I was happy to be the assistant director. For the last few years, I had painted sets or played minor roles, so this was a big step up. But deep down, I had secretly hoped I could be the director. When I grow up, I want to be a famous movie director. Miss Tweet, even though she's nice, isn't the type of person to change things very much. I was glad to help out Miss Tweet, but I was sad that I couldn't do things my way.

The next morning, Holly and Jasmine headed to arts and crafts while I went over to Juniper Lodge for the first rehearsal of *America the Beautiful*. When I got there, however, instead of the excited faces I expected to see, all I saw were glum expressions.

"What happened?" I asked, staring at all of the looks of misery.

One girl said, "Miss Tweet is in the hospital with a broken leg, so we won't be able to put on the play."

"What?" I asked, stunned. "No play? Nothing? Zilch? Nada?"

"Yup," a boy said sadly. "Nothing, zilch, nada."

Who can we get to direct this play? I thought.

Suddenly, I had a great idea.

When I told Holly and Jasmine my idea at lunch, they cried, "What?"

"Yes, I'm going to direct the play," I repeated.

"Um, Ellie, no offense, but ..." Holly started, cautiously.

"You don't know how to put on a play!" Jasmine finished, waving her spoon for emphasis.

"I know that," I said calmly, "but camp always

Illustrations: Jennifer Kalis

ends with a play. It's a tradition."

The next day, I called a meeting with the campers who were supposed to participate in the play.

"Hello, everyone," I said nervously. "As I'm sure you know, Miss Tweet has broken her leg, and the camp director, Mr. Jacobs, doesn't think it's safe for her to walk up the hill every day to help us rehearse the play. But that doesn't mean we have to stop the camp tradition of performing a play. So I'm volunteering to step into the director role."

Silence.

"Good," I said. "My name is Eleanor, but you can call me Ellie."

"I'm Jason, and I am going to be playing George Washington," one boy said.

"My name is Lydia, and I'll be making the costumes," another girl said.

And on it went. Soon I knew everyone's names and roles. The show was up and running.

Sort of.

It had been a tough day at rehearsal. "No, Jason, Ben Franklin was born in 1706, not 1607!" I said, exasperated.

"What else could possibly go wrong?" I muttered as I walked backstage.

agree on what set to paint first. There was no way I could handle this. But then I thought back to the plays that Miss Tweet had directed. *What if Miss Tweet were here? What would she do to fix this?* At that moment, I decided to spring into action.

"OK," I said firmly, surveying the damage.

Pointing to a group of kids, I said, "You four will paint the backdrop of Mount Rushmore first.

"What else could possibly go wrong?" I muttered as I walked backstage.

As it turns out, a lot.

I stared in amazement at the backstage area of Juniper Lodge. It was chaos. The ropes were tangled, the costumes didn't fit, and no one could

Jasmine, can you help with the lights and curtains? Lydia, what do you need to get those costumes to work? Come on, everyone, we have a play to practice!"

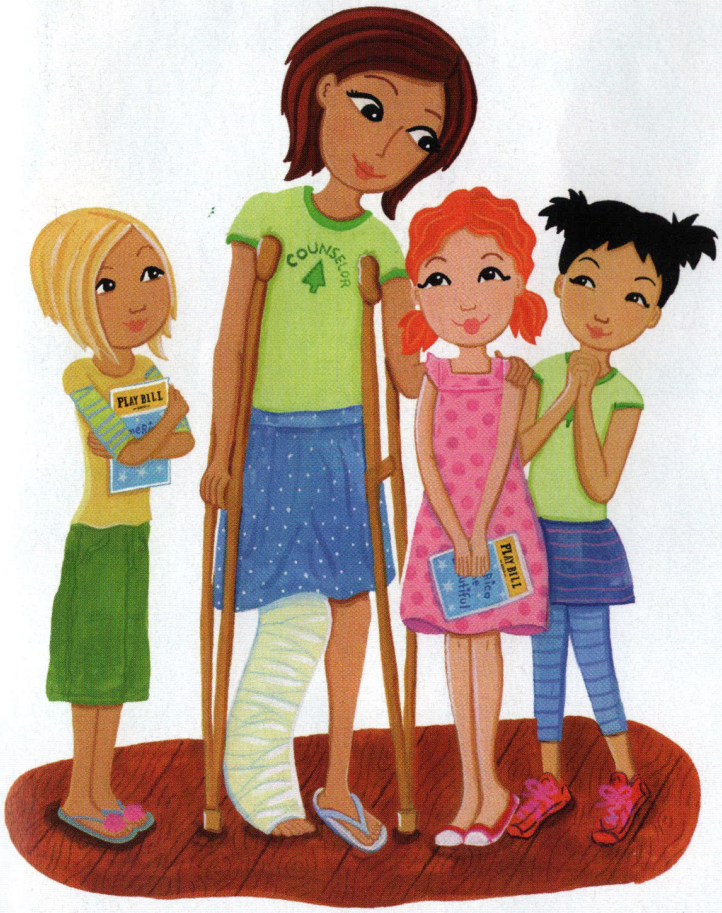
Over the next few days, things calmed down. Lydia made the costumes even better, the sets were looking great, and the actors were starting to remember their lines.

Soon, it was opening night.

The stage lights glared down on me as I walked on to the stage. Tapping the microphone softly to make sure that it was on, I started the show.

"Um, hello, everyone," I said. My voice shook a little. "I want to thank you for coming tonight. As you may know, Miss Tweet, who usually directs this show, is resting with a broken leg. We worked really hard to make this play happen, so I hope you'll enjoy the show!"

The curtain rose, and *America the Beautiful* began. Twenty minutes later, the audience called for an encore. We were a hit.



Afterward, we met backstage. I cried, "You guys were amazing!" before giving each person a hug.

"Yes, you campers were extraordinary," a voice said behind me.

We all turned.

"Miss Tweet!" Holly exclaimed. "You're here!"

"We tell each other to 'break a leg' before going on stage. Who would have thought I'd break my leg for real?" Miss Tweet said, smiling broadly. "You kids made Camp Swallow proud today."

"Thank you, Miss Tweet," the campers said happily.

Then Miss Tweet turned to me and said, "Ellie, I want to congratulate you on a job well done. You stepped up and took the lead. With that kind of courage, you might be a great director one day." For me, Miss Tweet's words were the best part of the whole show. ★

Meet the Author

Loyalty, age 13, lives in California.

Loyalty L.

Even though I wrote a story about how fun camp can be, I actually don't like going to camp. I've been to an overnight camp twice, and the bugs freaked me out. But I did enjoy making crafts and spending time with my friends!

Honorable Mentions

Amaris F.
Age 11, New York

Zoe E.
Age 8, Pennsylvania

Lexi R.
Age 10, Missouri

Olivia d.
Age 13, Connecticut

Felicia J.
Age 12, Arizona

Fiona P.
Age 11, North Carolina

City Sparkle

Dress your doll in glamour and glitz for her big-city summer trip!

Glittering Gown

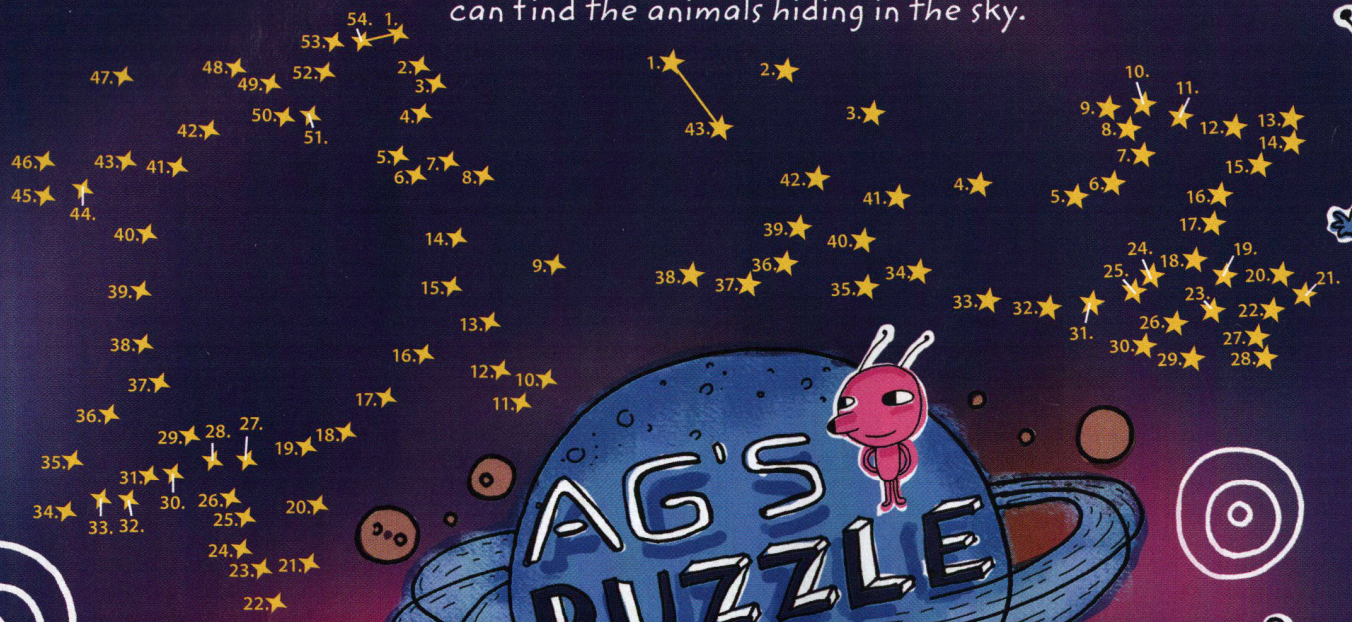
Slip your doll into a dazzling dress for her evening events. To make one, ask an adult if you can cut a leg off an old pair of **shiny leggings.** For each armhole, cut a 1-inch slit 1½ inches from the hemmed edge. Gently slip the dress onto your doll, feet first. **Caution:** Some fabrics may dye your doll's vinyl, so check her often for rub-off. For best results, use light colors, don't get the dress wet, and remove it after her city trip.

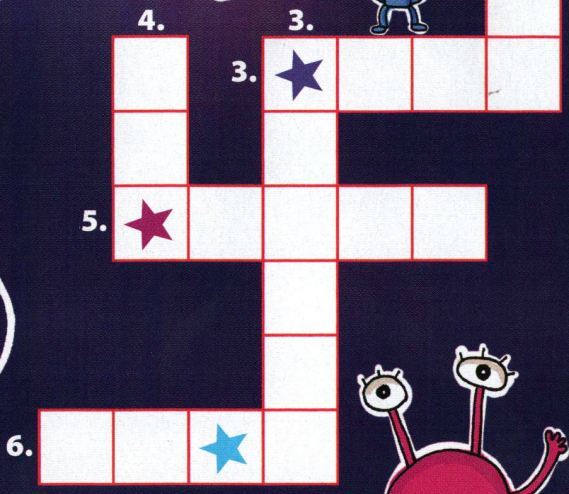
Brilliant Bling

Light up the night with these city sparklers. For a choker, use a **Glue Dot®** to attach a **silver ribbon** around your doll's neck. For a ruby ring, slip a **red bead** onto an **elastic cord,** tying the knot as close to the bead as you can. For a pearl bracelet, string **pearl beads** onto an elastic cord. For a fancy cape, cut a 7-by-13-inch piece of **craft fur,** rub it outside to remove loose fibers, drape it over your doll's shoulders, and hold it closed with a **sparkling pin.** ★

CREATURE CONSTELLATIONS

Use a gel pen to connect the stars and see if you can find the animals hiding in the sky.





SKY WRITING

Can you solve this star-studded crossword puzzle? Each symbol stands for the word "star." We've done one for you.

Across

2. If you see an actor, you might be this.
3. You might do this to someone if you say, "Boo!"
5. You might see this five-armed creature at the beach.
6. This means "to begin again."

Down

1. The opposite of ketchup.
2. This is what you do when you look up at the night sky.
3. _____, Star Bright.
4. When you're not the main character in a movie, you're a...

Turn to page 56 for the answers.

Illustrations: Binny Talib

Posters Carefully cut along the dotted lines to remove your posters.

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Tropical Dreams

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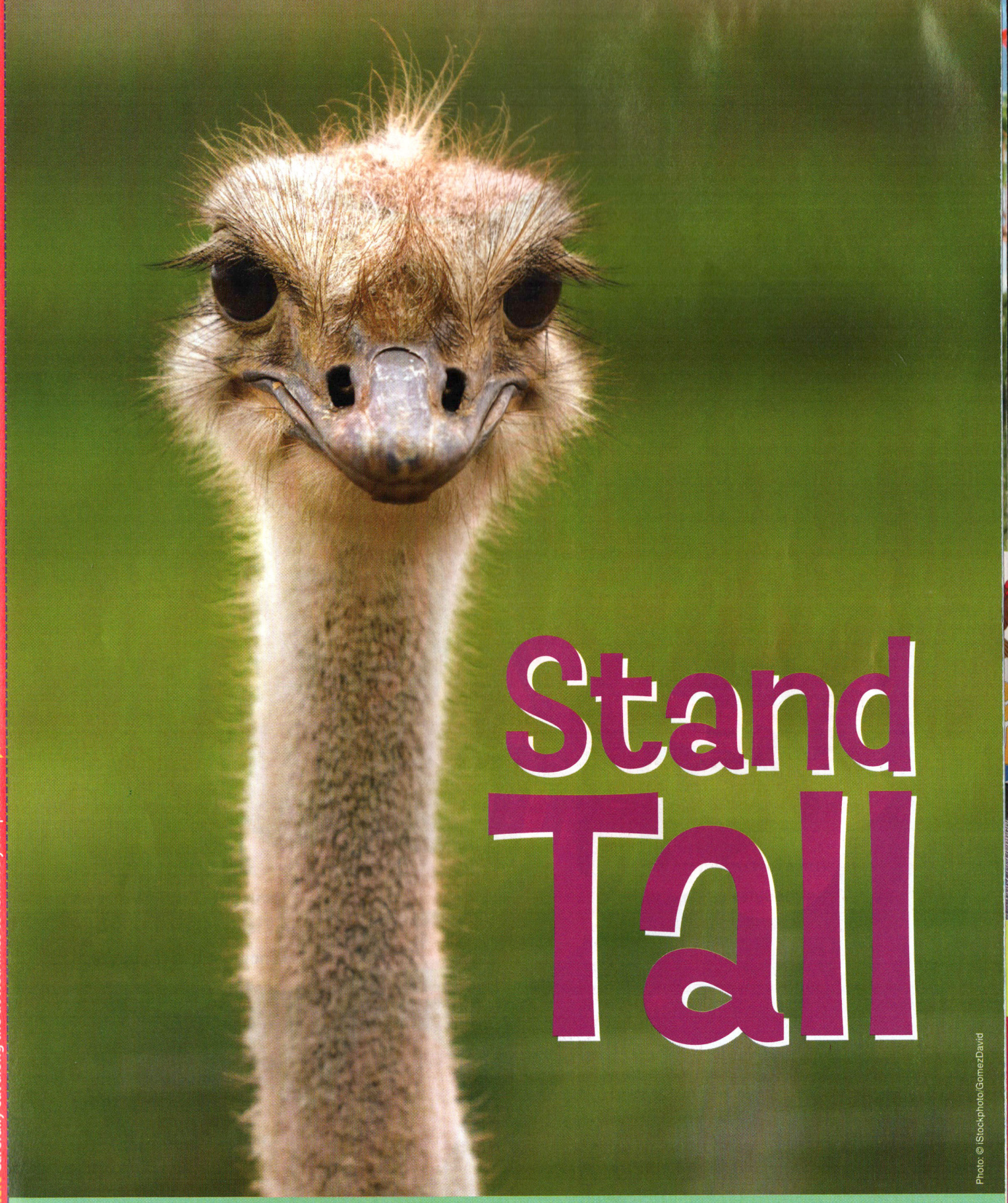

Posters Carefully cut along the dotted lines to remove your posters.

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Illustrations: Mona Daly

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HELP!

Dear *American Girl,*

I want to buy everything I see, and I just love owning stuff. My room is packed with things I don't use, but I want to keep it all anyway.

Help!

Letting go of stuff can be hard. But when you have too much stuff, it's impossible to stay organized. That makes your room a mess, and your life can become stressful in a hurry. Keep the items you truly love, but think about giving away the stuff you don't need to someone who can use it. If you do that, you'll feel great, and your life will be more peaceful, too.

Dear *American Girl,*

My friends and family say that I have an attitude. I don't notice it, so I have no idea how to fix it. What am I supposed to do?

attitude?

Ask your family to point it out when they feel you're being rude. Your attitude might be in what you say or how you say it. If someone is mad or hurt after you've spoken, ask about it. "Maybe that didn't come out how I meant it. Did that upset you?" What you hear back might help you fix the issue. Bonus: People often respect a girl who is trying to do better. Good for you.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

My siblings do swim team, and the coaches always ask when I'm going to join. The answer is never. How do I say it politely?

Can't say NO

The trick is to say something nice about the team as you say no. "I know how much Evan and Taylor love swim team, but it's not my thing—I'm working on my soccer game." That probably won't be the last time you hear from those coaches. But if you don't get annoyed and always practice nice-then-no, you should sound strong but still polite.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I liked AG's ideas for spending time with your grandma. But I'm too nervous to tell my grandma about the ideas.

afraid

It's normal to feel a little shy about bringing up something new with an adult. So start small. Pick one idea that you'd like to try with your grandma, and mention it casually. "I thought it would be fun for you and me to do something together, just the two of us. What do you think?" Tell her the idea, and see what happens. Chances are, she'll be happy to hang out with you.

★

Illustrations: Laura Cornell

MORE HELP!

Dear *American Girl,*

I have a friend who always wants to borrow things from me that were expensive or are really special to me. I don't want to loan them to her, and when I say no, she gets mad.

I don't know what to say

You do not have to loan your friend anything. But she might be feeling as if your "no" means that you don't trust her. So try making your "no" about yourself, rather than about her. "It's not that I don't trust you. I love that so much that I just can't let it out of my sight."

★

Dear *American Girl,*

My Sunday school teacher just died! He was my friend's uncle. I want to tell her how sorry I am, but I don't know if she wants to hear it.

sad

It's always kind to let a sad friend know that you're thinking of her. If you feel too awkward to speak to her, how about making her a card? Write, "I'm sorry about your uncle. I liked being in his class, and I'm here if you need to talk." Short and sweet will do the trick.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

My best friend made me some earrings. Nice—but they are sooo ugly. If I wear them, people will laugh at me. If I don't, I'll hurt my friend. What do I do?

Earring Trouble

You sound like a good friend, and what you need here is compromise.

What if you attached one of the earrings to a cord and wore it as a bracelet? Ask your friend if you can try that. You also could wear them the next time your friend comes over. If she asks, you can tell her that even though the earrings aren't really your style, they're important to you because they're from her. That way, she'll feel appreciated.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

My mom buys me outfits that are supposed to go together. I don't want to wear matchy outfits, but I don't know how to mix-and-match in my closet.

outfits

Start with one item from a matchy outfit, such as a shirt. Try on that top with every bottom you own, and see what looks good—don't say no to any combo until you've tried it on. Then mix up items from other outfits. To your mom, try: "I'm starting to get my own style, and I want to mix up my clothes. It should help me get more use out of them, and I'll be happier, too."

★

even MORE HELP!

Dear *American Girl*,

I love art, and I want to be an artist. But whenever I sit down to do a project, I can't think of anything to draw! Where is my creativeness?

artist

Your creativity is inside you. The problem is, it doesn't always want to come out to play the second you're ready. What you need is to carry a little notebook with you. Whenever you experience something that would make good art—a pretty tree, an awesome song lyric, colors in a store window—sketch the art in your book. That way, when you can sit down with your art supplies, you'll have a good first draft of a great drawing.

★

Dear *American Girl*,

I'm the oldest kid in my family. My parents have started going out together at night and making me stay home to baby-sit my siblings. I don't like it.

Left out

It's no fun feeling as if your parents are off having fun without you. No doubt they love spending time with their kids, but they also are friends who just want to hang out by themselves sometimes. They're glad to have someone responsible at home—you—to let them go out. To make this change easier, ask your parents to make a clear set of plans and rules for what should go on while they're out. You also might plan some family nights to help everyone stay connected.

★

Dear *American Girl*,

I'm bigger than all the girls my age. I have big feet and long arms, and I'm the tallest in my class. People don't want to be my friend—they say it's because I'm a giant. Can you help me?

Being singled out for anything is tough. In your case, it can hurt. You're being bullied, and it's OK to stand up for yourself. Try, "Please don't call me names." Or "I can't believe you said that!" Or just "Wow." If it doesn't stop, tell a trusted adult. Do things outside of school that make you feel good, strong, and happy. And keep being your great self—a girl who would be a great friend to have.

★

Advice from You

"Do you dread doing chores? Try taking before-and-after pictures of your hard work. This works for your room, the kitchen, and even the yard, if you have to mow it."

Elaine B.

Age 12, South Carolina

Need advice? Got advice? Write:

Help!

***American Girl* magazine**

8400 Fairway Place

Middleton, WI 53562

Alexandra P., age 10, and Katie E., age 10, of Texas worked together to color in the poster from last year's July/August issue.

It took more than 100 shots to get the perfect bubbly pic for our cover!

SUMMER

Show your true colors with a friend—color in the poster together!

Behind the Scenes

Happy summer from *American Girl*!

To make your own magazine cover, go to americangirl.com/playmagazine

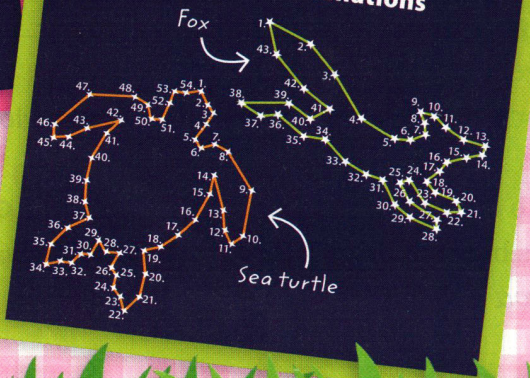
AG's Puzzle Page Answers:

Skywriting

Across
2. Starstruck
3. Startle
5. Starfish
6. Restart

Down
1. Mustard
2. Stargaze
3. Starlight
4. Costar

Creature Constellations



American Girl received more than 1,000 fiction contest entries, and we read every one!

Watch for another fiction contest in an upcoming issue!

Photos: Steven Talley

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American Girl®

Illustrations: Carol Yoshizumi

Coming up in the October issue of *American Girl* magazine

School Style
See girls' dream outfits for the first day of school.

Boo Bash
Our spooky Halloween party is a scream!

Kooky Cake
Bake a treat that's so cute, it's scary.

"I'm late!"
How to get out the door in a flash

For more fun and games, go to americangirl.com/playmagazine

American Girl

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Carefully cut out your

American Girl

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Illustration: Carol Yoshizumi

American Girl

Let's flock to the library!

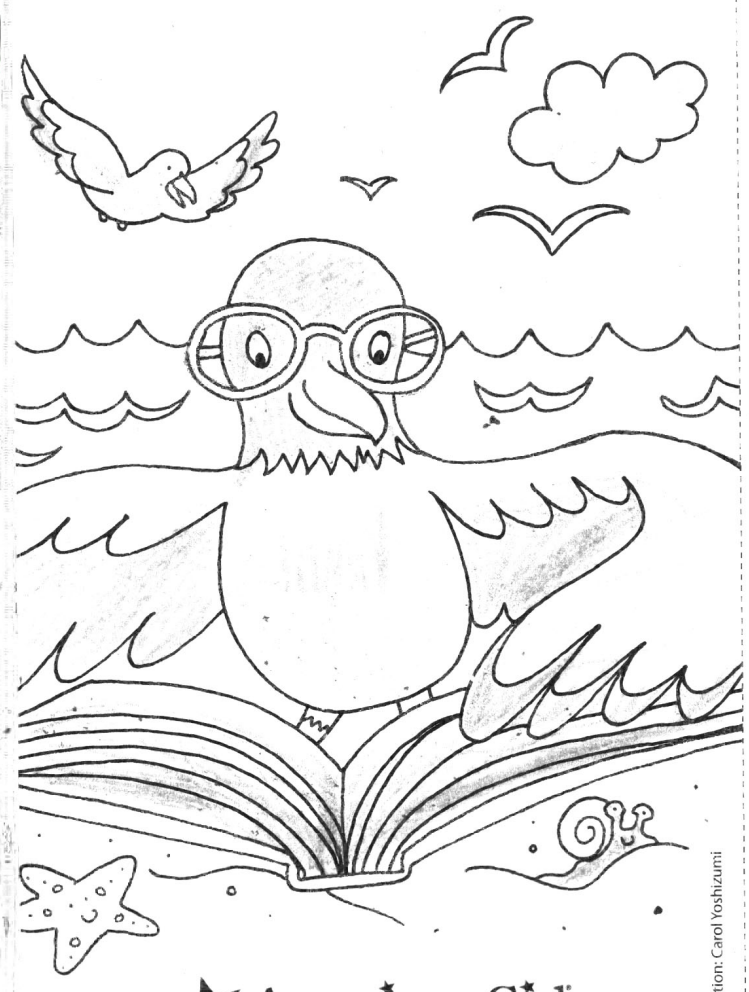

Illustration: Carol Yoshizumi

American Girl

Beach Buddies

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